

Chapter 7

HEARING CONSERVATION PROGRAM

7-1. Purpose. To implement the Army Hearing Conservation Program for military and civilian personnel at Tobyhanna Army Depot.

7-2. References.

- a. AR 40-5, Preventative Medicine
- b. AR 385-10, Army Safety Program
- c. 29 CFR 1910.95, Occupational Noise Exposure
- d. DA Pam 40-501, Hearing Conservation

7-3. Background.

a. Noise may be defined as sound damaging to the ear. The loss of hearing can occur from exposure to impulse or impact noise such as hammers, machines, etc., or from continuous or intermittent sounds such as drills, engines, machines, and various other industrial type activities. This loss could be temporary or it may be permanent because of injury to the inner ear.

b. Hazardous noise is defined as noise levels greater than 85dBA or impulse/impact noise exceeding a peak sound pressure levels of 140dBA. The 85dBA approximates conditions that exist when it is difficult to hear a normal spoken voice at a distance of 2 feet. When this noise level is exceeded and judged to be hazardous, a hearing conservation program shall be mandatory. Enrollment into the hearing conservation program shall be mandatory whenever an employee exposure level exceeds 85 dBA as an 8 hour time weighted average (TWA).

c. The effectiveness of a Hearing Conservation Program depends on:

- (1) General awareness of hazardous noise in the working environment.
- (2) Reduction of hazardous noise in the working environment.
- (3) Mandatory use of required hearing protective devices.
- (4) Monitoring audiometry and periodic audiometric examinations for required employees and health education.

7-4. Policies.

a. Engineering Control Methods. Controlling noise hazards will be accomplished primarily by engineering methods for the reduction of noise at its source. Various approaches that may be used include:

- (1) Attenuation of noise at its source by engineering design of equipment.
- (2) Substitution for a less noisy operation.

- (3) Isolation by removal to a remote area.
- (4) Acoustical treatment of rooms.
- (5) Enclosure of the noise source.
- (6) Proper maintenance of equipment.

b. Noise measurements and analysis required for hazard determination are made by Industrial Hygiene.

c. Audiometry.

(1) Pre-employment Examinations (Baseline). All military personnel and civilian employees shall receive a reference audiometric examination prior to being placed into any designated hazardous noise area. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring this requirement is accomplished.

(2) Transfer Examination. All employees transferring into or out of a noise hazardous occupation or area (with a baseline already on file) must receive an audiometric examination. For personnel transferring into an area, this examination shall be conducted within 90 days of the new assignment. For personnel transferring out, the hearing test shall be conducted upon termination of service. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring this requirement is accomplished.

(3) Annual Medical Surveillance. Hearing tests will be conducted annually for as long as the employee remains in the Hearing Conservation Program. An employee whose hearing has shown a significant threshold shift will be retested and the employee will be counseled. If the employee's hearing progressively deteriorates at an abnormal rate, as determined by the health clinic, the employee cannot be allowed to continue to work in the hazardous noise environment.

d. Personal Protective Devices and Use. The use of hearing protective devices (ear plugs and/or muffs) are the best personal protective measures known. Mandatory use of hearing protective devices by personnel assigned to noise hazardous occupations or areas while actually being exposed to continuous levels greater than or equal to 85 dBA or impact/impulse levels of 140 dBA peak sound pressure. Generally, in areas where the noise levels exceed 103 dBA, a combination of ear plugs and muffs (double protection) shall be worn. In areas where the noise levels exceed 107dBA, double hearing protection and time limitations will apply. NOTE: Hearing aids, when shut off, do not offer any protection against hazardous noise.

e. Training. All personnel identified for inclusion in the Hearing Conservation Program shall receive initial instruction in the requirements of the program and appropriate refresher training annually.

f. Posting Requirements. All noise hazardous areas, tools, and equipment shall be marked with the appropriate hazardous noise warning poster, decal/label and/or signs. DA Poster 40-501A (Occupational Noise Exposure Standard and Hearing Conservation Amendment) shall be posted in all noise hazardous areas.

7-5. Responsibilities.

a. Safety Manager. The Safety Manager shall be responsible for:

(1) Coordinating the Hearing Conservation Program with the depot Health Clinic.

(2) Coordination of noise measurements and analysis with Industrial Hygiene.

(3) Identify and ensure areas/equipment that exceed the noise criteria are properly posted/labeled.

(4) Ensure personnel use hearing protection as required.

b. Medical Clinic. Shall ensure implementation of the following functions:

(1) Administer the Hearing Conservation Program with the coordination of the Safety Office.

(2) Provide medical examinations required in connection with the Hearing Conservation Program.

(3) Provide audiometric testing for personnel enrolled in the Hearing Conservation Program.

(4) Provides health education training and professional or technical guidance upon request.

c. Industrial Hygiene.

(1) Using approved and calibrated equipment, survey all suspected noise-hazardous areas and equipment at least once and within 30 days of any change in operations. Performs an initial evaluation of potential noise-hazardous worksites identified by the Safety Office within 30 days of notification.

(2) Establishes a time weighted average for employees working in noise-hazardous areas.

(3) Maintains a current inventory of all noise-hazardous areas and provides copies to the Safety Office.

d. Civilian Personnel Office.

(1) Ensure occupational health requirements are included in the inprocessing/outprocessing for new, transferring, or terminating employees.

(2) Coordinate with Industrial Hygiene to identify noise hazard positions for annotation on job descriptions, to include use of personal protective equipment.

(3) Inform Health Clinic and Safety Office of workers' compensation claims for hearing loss.

e. Directors and Chiefs, Tenant Activities. Unit commanders and supervisors of noise hazardous areas shall:

(1) Ensure that all personnel are scheduled and report for audiometric testing and hearing conservation educational briefings as required.

(2) Assure that all employees exposed to hazardous noise are adequately equipped with protection devices and ensure these devices are worn.

f. Noise Exposed Personnel.

(1) Report for all scheduled medical examinations and health education briefings concerning hearing conservation.

(2) Correctly wear approved and properly fitted hearing protectors when exposed to hazardous noise levels.

(3) Report any hearing problems or difficulties associated with hearing protectors to